



## **VA Capitol Health Care Network VISN 5 CARES Update**



### **VISN 5 CARES Market Plans February 2003**

#### **What is CARES?**

Simply stated, CARES (Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services) is a realignment study to objectively evaluate the best ways to provide high-quality health care services to more veterans in more locations during the next 20 years.

VA needed a new way to address projected changes in veteran population—their locations and medical needs—and to continue to bring VA's health care system into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. CARES will help VA to be a better steward of its assets, make better use of existing space and realign resources to better meet the needs of veterans.

#### **What is the current status of CARES?**

We are now in step four of the nine-step CARES process – development of Market Plans. In late November, Planning Initiatives for the three markets within the VA Capitol Health Care Network (VISN 5) were identified. Planning Initiatives are the gaps between the services we provide now and the projected services we will need to provide in the years 2012 and 2022. These Planning Initiatives are not decisions; they simply identify gaps between what we currently have and what we will need in the years 2012 and 2022. Some of the major gaps identified in VISN 5 include: inpatient demand and outpatient demand, including subspecialty areas. Market Plans will be developed as we analyze the gaps and decide the best approach to meeting the projected needs for the future. Plans to address the gaps for each market area will be developed after considering the input that we receive from our stakeholders (i.e. patients, employees, unions, veterans service organizations and congressional representatives). We will also be working with all parts of the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Department of Defense and our affiliates in preparing the Market Plans. To this end, CARES Market Planning Teams have been conducting briefings with stakeholders throughout the Network. Planning Initiatives for all 21 VISNs can be viewed at <http://www.va.gov/cares/>.

#### **What happens next?**

For the next month, each of the three market teams will develop Market Plans to deal with the gaps and identify strategies for meeting the projected demand in their particular market. The three market teams will come together to develop and finalize a VISN plan to meet all identified planning initiatives. During this process, the VISN and

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market teams will continue to conduct briefings with employees, veterans service organizations, affiliates, union leaders, congressional representatives and other stakeholders as they develop ideas and recommendations. In the development of Market Plans, factors will be considered such as enhancing the use of existing resources, maintaining relationships with medical schools, forging new partnerships with the Department of Defense and minimizing the impact on employees. Later this month, the VISN 5 CARES Steering Committee will review the recommendations of the three market areas. On March 15, 2003, the VISN will forward the CARES Market Plans to the National CARES Program Office. An independent national CARES Commission will then hold stakeholder meetings throughout the country and review the draft National CARES Plan before a recommendation is made to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs. The Market Plans will be integrated into a draft national CARES plan that will be reviewed by VA clinical leaders and by the independent CARES Commission beginning this spring. After the Commission has held a series of public hearings and collected input from veterans and other stakeholders, it will submit the final plan to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, who will announce his decision in October 2003.

**What opportunity is there for stakeholders to have a say in CARES?**

Throughout the CARES process, veterans, VA employees, unions, veterans service organizations, academic affiliates and elected officials will be involved through briefings and solicitation of comments. Comments may be provided by mail, e-mail, phone and town meetings. To provide input or obtain more information about the CARES planning process for the VA Capitol Health Care Network, please contact the VISN 5 CARES Hotline at 1-800-463-6295, ext. 7384 or send an e-mail to the VISN 5 CARES Help Desk at: [VISN5CARESHelpDesk@med.va.gov](mailto:VISN5CARESHelpDesk@med.va.gov). Please make sure to leave your name, phone number/address and your question/comment about the CARES planning process when contacting us. The VISN 5 CARES Planning Committee looks forward to hearing from you and will promptly respond to all of your questions and/or comments.

**How can I get more information on CARES?**

The VISN 5 CARES Update will be published at least monthly and more often if needed. CARES information is also available on the Network Internet Web site at: <http://www.va.gov/visn5/network/cares.htm>. Information about the CARES process in also available on the national CARES Web site is at: <http://www.va.gov/CARES/>.